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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000974

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E, NEA, AND IO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [DJ](#) [ICJ](#)

SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI'S MINISTER OF COOPERATION COMMENTS ON
ISRAELI SECURITY BARRIER AND ICJ ADVISORY OPINION DEMARCHE

REF: STATE 152014

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARGUERITA D. RAGSDALE.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Ambassador delivered reftel demarche 7/15 to Minister of Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mahmoud Ali Youssef. She went over the points provided in reftel, tracking them by line item, while Youssef listened and took notes. At the end of her presentation, the Ambassador said she would also provide a non-paper for the Government of Djibouti's use with its United Nations representative as we expected the vote on the proposed resolution to take place as early as the following day, 7/16.

2. (C) Youssef then asked Ambassador what was her personal view, "as a human being," of the wall that Israel is constructing. Ambassador responded that she preferred to view the issue of Israel's security wall in terms of the parties most affected by it and in terms of the response the United States has already made to it. For Israel, she said, it is its view that the wall offers the best protection for its citizenry from the probability of suicide bombers. Since the wall's construction began, the number of incidences of suicide bombings has decreased. Constructing the wall to prevent such attacks is a judgment that Israel has made, based on its perceived needs. The Palestinians, she continued, view it as disproportionately burdensome on them on humanitarian grounds and as a "land grab" by Israel of occupied territory. Some Palestinians take the position that if the wall should be created at all, it should be created on land that is Israel proper, and not part of the West Bank. From the U.S. perspective, the Ambassador continued, there are continuing concerns about the route the wall is taking, and we have made known those concerns to Israel.

3. (C) Youssef responded that he wanted to speak very frankly about this issue. He recalled a statement attributed to Benazir Bhutto, former President of Pakistan, on the practice of the veiling of women. "The only veil that truly exists," Youssef quoted Bhutto, "is the one that is in the eyes of individuals." Applying this to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, he said he is convinced that there is a mindset in that region now that is becoming very closed -- both on the part of Israelis and Palestinians. He fears that mindset more than anything else because it could mean the eventual impossibility of future dialogue. He said he was convinced that Israel could build another wall if it wished, and perhaps five more, but it will never achieve security for itself in the process. The only way that Israel can have security, he stated, is to have a dialogue, not build walls. To continue to blame the lack of dialogue on the Palestinians is not accurate.

4. (C) Youssef continued that the United States has to take the lead role in making this dialogue happen. To constantly endorse the actions of Israel, regardless of the nature of the action, and whether that position is right or wrong, is not helpful to this process. The U.S., he went on to say, has put forward a very interesting proposal called the Middle East Partnership Initiative, which raises some very interesting possibilities for our region. Yet it will be impossible for the U.S. to move forward on that issue until the problem between Palestinians and Israelis is resolved. Moreover, constantly taking positions that are clearly one-sided and imbalanced with respect to Israel, he continued, undermines U.S. moderate partners such as Egypt and Jordan. Youssef said he failed to see, "as a human being," the sense sometimes in the positions the U.S. government is taking.

5. (C) Youssef also said that it does not matter in the end whether Djibouti votes for the resolution calling for General Assembly endorsement of the International Court of Justice advisory opinion or abstains. This resolution will be voted in the affirmative by the vast majority of U.N. members. This will leave, he said, the U.S. in the position of having to veto, which will ultimately be unhelpful for the U.S. and the eventual resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli problem.

6. (C) Comment: Djibouti has avoided taking public stances in its mainstream news media on the Palestinian-Israeli issue. However, sympathy for the Palestinian plight is

revealed in official remarks, most recently in President Guelleh's speech on June 27 commemorating Djibouti's National Day. In that message, Guelleh said "Djibouti will never accept the destructive policy aimed at failure, which guides Mister Sharon in leading the Palestinian conflict. He has anchored himself into a unilateral vision, excluding completely the Palestinian people, with his firm will to install an Israeli state within Palestinian territory."

17. (C) Comment continued: Minister of Cooperation Youssef, one of the most thoughtful and respected officials in Djibouti's government, has lived and served as Djibouti's diplomat in several countries and speaks five languages fluently -- French, English, Afar, Arabic, and Somali. In his remarks, he attempted to convey a perspective that is deeply-felt and personal. Yet it is also quite representative of the general position of Djibouti, an Arab League member, and its largely Muslim citizenry. End comment.

18. (U) Khartoum minimize considered.
RAGSDALE